

WHAT PLACE FOR LITERATURE IN THE EDUCATION OF FRENCH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES?

A comparison between Belgium, France, Quebec and Switzerland

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Abstract: This contribution attempts a partial synthesis of a large international study (Collès, Dufays & Maeder, 2003), which explores the teaching and learning of Romance languages in France, French Belgium, French Switzerland and Quebec. Each author analysed in their country or region the official instructions related to primary and secondary school and the plans of action related to teachers' training. All dealt with the same questions. Considering those data, the analysis here focuses particularly on the section of the report concerning the teaching and learning of literature in French mother tongue lessons. Specifically, I address three questions:

1. Over the last 50 years, what place and value has been given to literature in the official programs for primary and secondary schools in the 4 countries or regions, compared to the other subjects considered as part of teaching French?
2. What are today's prescriptions as far as literature is concerned? In relation to the contemporary debate between different paradigms, is literature first handled in terms of skills or in terms of knowledge? Which values are these knowledges and skills bound to?

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3. What about the teachers' literature training? Are there important changes in this field which might be similar to the changes in the official prescriptions? Where were and are the teachers trained? What were, and are, the nature of, the level required and the relative weight given to this particular training?

Dutch. Samenvatting [translation Tanja Janssen]

In deze bijdrage wordt getracht een gedeeltelijke synthese te geven van een grootschalig internationaal onderzoek (Collès, Dufays & Maeder, 2003) naar het onderwijzen en leren van Romaanse talen in Frankrijk, Franstalig België, Franstalig Zwitserland en Quebec. De auteurs uit de verschillende landen hanteerden precies dezelfde vragen en analyseerden de officiële richtlijnen met betrekking tot het primair en secundair onderwijs en handelingsplannen met betrekking tot de lerarenopleiding. De analyse richt zich hier vooral op het gedeelte van het onderzoeksrapport dat betrekking heeft op het literatuuronderwijs in Franse moedertaallessen. Drie vragen komen aan de orde:

1. Welke plaats en waarde is gedurende de laatste 50 jaar toegekend aan literatuur in de officiële programma's voor het primair en secundair onderwijs in de vier landen of regio's, vergeleken met andere onderdelen van het onderwijs Frans?
2. Wat zijn de tegenwoordige richtlijnen voor literatuur? In relatie tot het huidige debat tussen verschillende paradigma's: wordt literatuur vooral behandeld in termen van vaardigheden of in termen van kennis? Met welke waarden zijn deze vaardigheden en kennis verbonden?
3. Hoe staat het met de opleiding van literatuurdocenten? Zijn er belangrijke verschuivingen op dit terrein die zouden kunnen samenhangen met verschuivingen in de officiële voorschriften? Waar werden en worden leraren opgeleid? Wat was en is de aard van deze opleiding, wat was en is het vereiste niveau en het relatieve gewicht toegekend aan deze opleiding?

French. Résumé [author].

Quelle place pour l'enseignement de la littérature dans les pays francophones? Une comparaison entre la Belgique, la France, le Québec et la Suisse? Cette contribution présente la synthèse partielle d'une vaste étude internationale (Collès, Dufays & Maeder 2003)¹ qui établit un état des lieux de l'enseignement-apprentissage des langues romanes en France, en Belgique francophone, en Suisse romande et au Québec. Chaque auteur a analysé dans son pays ou sa région les instructions officielles relatives à l'enseignement primaire et secondaire et les plans d'actions relatifs à la formation des enseignants, en traitant chaque fois les mêmes questions. Sur la base des données ainsi recueillies, la présente analyse s'attache particulièrement à la partie de l'enquête qui concerne l'enseignement-apprentissage de la littérature dans les classes de français langue première. Plus précisément, je traiterai ici trois questions :

1. Quelle place et quelle valeur la littérature a-t-elle incarnées depuis 50 ans dans les instructions officielles du primaire et du secondaire des quatre pays ou régions concernés par rapport aux autres composantes de l'enseignement du français?
2. Quelles sont les prescriptions actuelles relatives à la littérature? En relation avec le débat contemporain qui oppose différents paradigmes, la littérature est-elle d'abord traitée en termes de compétences ou en termes de savoirs? Et à quelles valeurs les savoirs et/ou les compétences concernés sont-ils rattachés?
3. Qu'en est-il de la formation des enseignants en matière littéraire? Observe-t-on d'importants changements à ce propos en parallèle avec l'évolution des prescriptions officielles? Où les enseignants étaient-ils et sont-ils formés à la littérature? Quels étaient et quels sont la nature, le niveau d'exigence et le poids relatif de leur formation?

German. Zusammenfassung [Translation Irene Pieper]

Welchen Platz kann die Literatur im Unterricht französisch-sprachiger Länder noch einnehmen? Ein Vergleich zwischen Belgien, Frankreich, Quebec und der Schweiz.

Dieser Beitrag bietet eine partielle Synthese einer groß angelegten internationalen Studie (Collès, Dufays & Maeder 2003), die das Lehren und Lernen der romanischen Sprachen in Frankreich, in den französischsprachigen Teile Belgiens und der Schweiz sowie in Quebec betrachtet. Die Autoren der Studie haben alle mit den gleichen Fragen gearbeitet und in ihren jeweiligen Ländern die offiziellen Instruktionen für Primar- und Sekundarstufe analysiert sowie die Vorgaben in der Lehrerbildung. Meine Analyse bezieht

¹ Collès, L., Dufays, J-L., & Maeder, C. (Eds) (2003). *Enseigner le français, l'espagnol et l'italien. Les langues romanes à l'heure des compétences*. Bruxelles: De Boeck-Duculot.

sich besonders auf den Bereich des Berichts, der das Lehren von und Lernen mit Literatur im Französischunterricht betrifft. Insbesondere spreche ich die folgenden drei Fragen an:

1. Welchen Raum hat Literatur in den offiziellen Programmen für die Primar- und Sekundarstufe in den Regionen über die vergangenen 50 Jahre eingenommen? Welcher Wert wurde ihr beigemessen?
2. Was sind die gegenwärtigen normativen Vorgaben im Bereich der Literatur? Angesichts der gegenwärtigen Diskussion unterschiedlicher Paradigmen ist zu fragen, ob Literatur in erster Linie im Zusammenhang von Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten behandelt wird oder im Zusammenhang mit Wissen? Welche Wertigkeiten sind mit diesen Orientierungen verbunden?
3. Wie verhält es sich mit der Lehrerbildung im Bereich der Literatur? Finden sich dort ähnlich bedeutsame Veränderungen wie im Bereich der schulischen Vorgaben? Wo wurden und werden die Lehrenden ausgebildet? Wie sieht die Lehrerbildung aus, welches Anforderungsniveau lässt sich rekonstruieren und welches Gewicht wird diesem Ausbildungsweg beigemessen?

Polish. Streszczenie [translation Elżbieta Awramiuk]

Niniejszy artykuł stanowi próbę częściowej syntezy dużego międzynarodowego projektu (Collès, Dufays & Maeder 2003), poświęconego nauczaniu języków romańskich we Francji, francuskojęzycznej Belgii, francuskojęzycznej Szwajcarii i w Quebecu. Wszyscy autorzy zadają te same precyzyjne pytania i każdy z nich analizuje oficjalne w jego kraju lub regionie instrukcje dotyczące nauczania w szkole podstawowej i średniej, a także plany kształcenia nauczycieli. Biorąc pod uwagę powyższe dane, w niniejszym tekście skupiam się na omówieniu tej części badań, która dotyczy nauczania literatury na lekcjach języka francuskiego. W szczególności zajmuję się następującymi kwestiami:

1. Jakie miejsce i jaką wartość przyznawano literaturze – w porównaniu do innych przedmiotów traktowanych jako część nauczania języka francuskiego – w oficjalnych programach do szkół podstawowych i średnich w czterech krajach / regionach w ciągu ostatnich 50 lat?
2. Jakie są obecne zalecenia w zakresie nauczania literatury? Czy – w relacji do współczesnej debaty między różnymi paradygmatami – w nauczaniu literatury pierwszeństwo przyznaje się umiejętnościom czy wiedzy? Z jakimi wartościami ta wiedza i umiejętności są związane?
3. Co można powiedzieć o kształceniu nauczycieli literatury? Czy zaszły na tym polu jakieś istotne zmiany wywołane oficjalnymi zaleceniami? Jakie było i jakie jest szkolenie nauczycieli? Jaki był i jaki jest poziom wymagań? Jakie znaczenie przypisywano temu kształceniu, a jakie się przypisuje teraz?

Portuguese. Resumo. [Translation Paulo Feytor-Pinto]

Este contributo procura fazer uma síntese parcial de um grande estudo internacional (Collès, Dufays & Maeder, 2003) que explora o ensino e a aprendizagem de línguas românicas em França, na Bélgica francófona, na Suíça francófona e no Quebec. Todos os autores trabalharam exactamente as mesmas questões e cada um analisou, no seu país ou região, as instruções oficiais relativas ao ensino básico e secundário e os planos de acção relativos à formação de professores. Todos trataram os mesmos aspectos. Tendo em conta esses dados, a análise centra-se especialmente no capítulo dedicado ao ensino e aprendizagem da literatura nas aulas de Francês língua materna, de que são abordados três aspectos:

1. Ao longo dos últimos 50 anos, que lugar e valor tem sido atribuído à literatura nos programas oficiais dos ensinos básico e secundário nos quatro países ou regiões, comparando com os outros aspectos do ensino do Francês?
2. O que é actualmente prescrito relativamente à literatura? No quadro do actual debate entre diferentes paradigmas, a literatura é apresentada em termos de competências ou de conhecimentos? Estes conhecimentos e competências radicam em que valores?
3. E o que se passa com a formação de professores em literatura? Há mudanças relevantes nesta área que possam equiparar-se às mudanças nas orientações oficiais? Onde foram e são formados os professores? Qual foi e é a natureza, o nível exigido e o peso relativo desta área específica de formação?

Key words: Didactics of French – international comparison – teachers training – literary education – Belgian educational system – French educational system – Quebec education system – Swiss education system –teaching reading–teaching writing

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will attempt a partial synthesis of a large international study entitled *Enseigner le français, l'espagnol et l'italien. Les langues romanes à l'heure des compétences* (Collès, Dufays & Maeder, 2003). The study was carried out over 3 years (2000-2002) by 29 French-speaking didacticists² coordinated by 2 specialists of L2 (Collès and Maeder) and one MTE specialist (Dufays). The purpose was to explore the teaching and learning of Romance languages in France, French Belgium, French Switzerland and Quebec (which are the 4 countries or regions in which French is the mother tongue of a majority of people) following the point of view of the official instructions. Among the 29 authors, nine worked on the specific fields of MTE: two Frenchmen (D. Bucheton and J.-P. Simon), one Quebecois (M. Lebrun), two Swiss (J. Dolz and M. Wirthner), and four Belgians (O. Dezutter, J.-M. Rosier, Fr. Thyron and me). All of them dealt with the same questions and analysed in their country or region the same kind of data, viz. the official instructions³ related to primary and secondary school and the plans of action related to teachers' training. The comparison that I will develop here is based on these data, though inevitably influenced by my interpretations. I will focus particularly on the section of the report concerning the teaching and learning of literature in French mother tongue lessons, through a comparison between the four regions or countries. More precisely, I will address the following three questions:

- 1) Over the last 50 years, what place and value has been given to literature in the official programs for primary and secondary schools in the four countries or regions, compared to the other subjects considered as part of teaching French? At the same time, are these other parts of French teaching the same in the four regions? With more or less the same attention paid to other designated areas?
- 2) Considering the same data, what are today's prescriptions as far as literature is concerned? In relation to the contemporary debate between different paradigms, is literature first handled in terms of skills (how to read, of course, but perhaps also how to write and to speak) or in terms of knowledge (history, style and genre, theory or other)? Which values are these knowledges and skills bound to?
- 3) What about the teachers' literature training? Are there important changes in this field which might be similar to the changes in the official prescriptions? Where were, and are, the teachers trained? What were, and are, the nature of, the level required in, and the relative weight given to, this particular training?

² As with all articles in this special issue, the term 'didactics' is equivalent to the English term 'pedagogy'.

³ As with all chapters in this volume, the terms 'prescriptions' and 'instructions' are interchangeable and are equivalent to the English term 'syllabus'.

2. TRENDS FOR THE PAST 50 YEARS IN THE OFFICIAL PROGRAMS: SIMILAR IN THE FOUR COUNTRIES

2.1 *Before 1970: literature as an object transmitting a common culture*

When we first look at the history of official instructions, it is clear that the four French-speaking regions have experienced nearly the same evolution at the same time. Until the end of the '60s, the educational priority was dedicated to passing on 'knowledge', as much in mother tongue as in foreign languages. In the first place came literary knowledge which focused on the great movements, authors and texts (mostly studied chronologically and through extracts, for which commentary was given exclusively by the teacher). There was also linguistics and language knowledge consisting of – especially in primary school – grammar rules, vocabulary and conjugation tables, and connected only to written language.

In primary school, most French lessons were dedicated to grammatical analysis of discourses and literary-like texts or spelling, through the sacrosanct exercise of dictation, such as in the grammars and compilations of dictations published by M. Grevisse (who was a classical author for all four countries; today, this kind of reference to common 'handbooks' no longer exists in these four countries).

Secondary school was above all a question of reading and commenting on major works of French literature, almost always through anthologies (such as in France *Lagarde et Michard* and in Belgium *Modèles français*). Writing activities essentially consisted of compositions or literary essays, in which the goal was to imitate the famous writers.

Literature teaching was thus formalised through a number of well-defined school activities: imitative composition at primary school; composed commentary and literary essay at secondary level. This situation was especially strong in France, where these exercises were the subject of national end-of-schooling exams.

'Functional' (non-literary) language and speaking were not totally neglected, but there was not much space left for them. Before 1970, with the exception of isolated attempts inspired by a few avant-garde educationists like Freinet and Decroly, we would look in vain for activities trying to develop the reading or writing of 'non-literary' texts and of the art of speech for its own sake, in primary as well as secondary education.

Related to a homogeneous and consensual conception of the subject *French*, this double focus on literary culture and on writing was in accordance with public consensus. Remember also that the educated public at that time only represented a limited portion of the population – in 1950, only 30% of French pupils attended secondary schools, compared to 1980, in which the proportion was close to 100% (Hamon & Rotman, 1984: 15). Moreover, this public was made up of what Bourdieu & Passeron (1964) called 'heirs', that is pupils coming from privileged socio-cultural classes. These 'heirs' were familiarised at an early age with the world of writing, so they were predisposed to appropriate the most noble values and knowledge related to writing. In such a context, it seemed absolutely natural that a mission of pure 'reproduction' was given to French teaching as well as to the institution of schooling as

a whole – a reproduction not only of the pieces of knowledge which were taught, but also of hierarchies among them.

The teaching method chosen within this framework was natural – in order to favour the appropriation of great authors and texts by all the pupils, nothing was more appropriate than an authoritative transmission and learning based on memorising declarative knowledges. The main idea is that these knowledges are essentially intellectual food which can be exploited in various contexts (the term ‘transferred’ is not used yet). In each student lies a mass of resources allowing him/her to spontaneously make the transfer in an appropriate way. The school ideal is the accumulation of knowledges as bounded by the subject discipline.

Furthermore, in this conception, mother tongue education appears as the model of all language education – French as a foreign language follows the same aims and the same methods.

So, here we have a kind of paradigm of literature education – its objective is cultural heritage, its content is objective facts about great authors and works, its didactics is a transmission of knowledge, aiming at reproduction. Its legitimating is the national-cultural socialisation of pupils and students. This is a paradigm historically seen as representing elite education and reproduction of the cultural capital of this elite.

However, this is the picture which emerges from official discourse, rather than daily practice. Even when we have not analysed data about practice, we can suppose that it was more diversified than the common prescriptions. In the same way, even if in the '70s the transmission model loses a major part of its aura in official discourse, it seems obvious that it persisted – sometimes in a dominant way – in many institutions and among many teachers who were not necessarily followers of proselytism or tradition (cf the evidence collected in Dieu, Druart & Renard, 1995).

2.2 From the 70s to the 80s: literature serving operational objectives

In institutional discourses as well as in research, the traditional conception of learning was blown away by the wind of renovation which blew over schools at the end of the '60s. In fact, the '70s and '80s were dominated by the paradigm of what was called ‘learning through objectives’, a rationalist and communicative model that tended to divide learning into a variety of units which could be defined in terms of ‘operational objectives’ (or ‘operational targets’). In this model, showing memorised knowledge or referring to literary models no longer mattered; it was now time to use functional skills in the sense of demonstrating an ability to use the language efficiently. As ‘communication’ and ‘expression’ became the key words, priority was given to the four communication skills of speaking, listening, writing and reading. The former hierarchy between mother tongue and foreign language was reversed: from now on, the foreign languages (renamed ‘modern languages’, or literally translating from French, ‘living languages’ – as opposed to ancient Greek and Latin, which are ‘dead languages’) were going to inspire the mother tongue with respect to teaching methods, especially as we began to realise that more and more students who attended French schools did not have French as mother tongue and really

needed to have it explained as a foreign language. This was happening in both primary and secondary education.

So reproduction of culture (transmission) was, as an educational objective, replaced by a mixture of rationalism, the communicative model, and a utilitarian model. This new paradigm was sustained by social, academic and educational forces that influenced the discourse and probably also the practice of education in French literature. As it is, the '60s were marked by 3 mutations:

- 1) a scientific mutation, consisting of the development of new academic subjects, such as linguistics and semiotics, which gave new perspectives on all cultural productions
- 2) a sociological mutation consisting of the exponential growth of the school population, in which the 'heirs' were less and less numerous – thus giving rise to new expectations and new teaching methods
- 3) a cultural mutation, consisting of the growth of the leisure society, of audiovisual media and of a change in the methods and values of cultural production (Nouveau Roman, Nouveau Théâtre, Nouvelle Vogue, Nouvelle Critique...) – all of which deeply changed views on texts and literature.

Those three mutations and their consequences for literature teaching clearly affected all four countries.

In these circumstances, the transmission of the heritage of legitimated great works loses its value. Literature, whenever it is still called 'literature', is now treated as a 'language practice' or as a 'particular approach to the language' and literature teaching gives way to teaching the 'reading' of various kinds of texts, in which technical analysis, often derived from structuralism, becomes prominent.

So we could now accurately speak of a reconfiguration of literature teaching because – within a decade – the concerns of the subject had truly and deeply changed. Non-literary and para-literary texts had been introduced into the corpus, reading methods were now rooted in other human sciences (such as sociology, anthropology, psychoanalysis) and the sacred belief in the unique meaning of a text was replaced by plural approaches. The consequence was a dispersal of knowledges and methods, but also a fading of literature in favour of 'texts' and of 'reading'. In Quebec, for example, the word 'literature' was simply erased from programs.

Thus we see a series of shifts: from literary heritage to structural analysis within the domain of literature ; the introduction of other genres next to literature ; texts viewed as 'language' and no longer to be seen as 'literary' and mother tongue education becoming more and more like foreign language education.

Preferred approaches were now technical analyses. An active pedagogy divided into 'framework activities' (global and contextualized activities) was indeed suggested, but appeared to be much less developed than 'structuration activities' (local, decontextualised and more technical activities). In addition were various innovations from research in the fields of writing and reading. Literature teaching – and French teaching in general – gained precision but lost a part of its former homogeneity.

2.3 *The 90s: time for skills*

Since the end of the '90s, teaching the French mother tongue and, indeed, the whole schooling system has been confronted by a new challenge: focusing on a new conception of skills. This conception was often used in the past in a Chomskyan sense in modern languages teaching, and in fact related to the four skills mentioned earlier. Nowadays, under the influence of the industrial workplace context, a kind of consensus is being reached to define 'skill' as the aptitude to use several appropriate pieces of knowledge and know-how (*savoir-faire*)⁴ in order to accomplish a specific task or to solve accurate problems in a concrete context. This paradigm, which has been growing in primary as well as in secondary education, is not less 'rationalist' than the former. Instead of a global communicative and expressive approach, this is a task-based approach, like the notional-functional approach in foreign language education.

While this new conception was imposed differently within France itself, in all four regions it brought about profound modifications in literature teaching. From now on, the dominant idea was that any cultural knowledge was a complex network of 'resources' useful to solve several problems and to do several actions. Therefore, school subjects could no longer be regarded as closed entities with clearly definable limits, and teaching experts now tried to list knowledges and skills that must be known or mastered to solve problems and concrete challenges. Skills were to emerge with the concept of interaction and to further involve the acting subject's position among other acting subjects⁵. For example, in Belgium, the last instructions of the Catholic network (2000) say that one of the 6 main skills to develop at the end of secondary school is 'to approach Literature from several points of view': institutional, historical, based on the author, related to other arts, etc. and, for each point of view, one is required to complete specific activities.

The new key values are now known as *knowledge integration, sharing, transferring, contextualisation*. In the case of literature, the notion of skill is associated – more or less clearly – with the notion of 'literary reading' which also aims at integrating and using knowledges and skills in complex activities. Actually, Picard (1986) defined 'literary reading' as an oscillation between a psycho-affective attitude and an intellectual, critical attitude, which is both the richest manner of reading and the only way to reveal the power of literature. More precisely, in their attempt to integrate knowledges and skills, teachers are invited to alternate activities which combine reading, writing and speaking with activities centred on the reflexive learning of literature : the practice of literature now goes together with learning to know –

⁴ *In the French literature about skills, an important difference exists between the concept of 'competence' (skill) and the concept of 'savoir-faire' (that I translate here as 'know-how'). 'Compétence' is a more general concept than 'savoir-faire'. A 'competence' is developed when someone uses simultaneously several 'savoirs' (knowledges) and 'savoir-faire' (know-how) in order to resolve a complex task.*

⁵ *School must, as we can read in a recent Swiss educational program, 'take part in the building of social knowledges and skills'. It means that school has to teach how to learn, to live and to work at the same time (Plan d'études vaudois of 2001, published by the General Direction of the Compulsory Teaching, p. 13).*

and to think about – its working and its values. This means that the focus of literature education is transferred from the literary repertoire of the text to its social repertoire.

Nevertheless, in official instructions, study plans and recent manuals concerning both French foreign language and French mother tongue, the notion of ‘skill’ still seems to be quite vague or ambiguous. The previously more or less homogeneous situation now becomes less homogeneous. Why? Probably because of both the variety of educational systems and the different rationalist or other models behind the changes. I will now attempt to ‘unpack’ the complexity of the current situation more precisely, but to do so, I will need to make distinctions between the different countries.

3. TODAY'S INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT LITERATURE TEACHING

When we want to characterise globally the teaching of literature in the four main French-speaking regions, we first have to address the variety of the educational systems in the four countries. While the official instructions are national and valid for the whole territory in France and Quebec, they vary in French-speaking Switzerland and French-speaking Belgium, depending on the administrative divisions in Switzerland (cantons) or on the education networks in Belgium (Switzerland has 7 cantons and Belgium four education networks⁶).

As each canton and network has its own instructions, the situation in Belgium and Switzerland is quite hard to synthesise. However, in both countries the presence of shared documents (2000's *Framework-plan* in French Switzerland and 1999's *Terminal skills reference manual* in Belgium) makes it possible to discern general trends and to draw comparisons with France and Quebec. I will now examine this comparison in 3 different areas:

- 1) the notion of ‘literary reading’ and its development as a skill in the link between primary and secondary school;
- 2) the place that is given to literary culture, and particularly to national literature;
- 3) the place given to the learning of literary writing.

I repeat that this comparison will focus on official directions’ and didacticians’ advice, not on actual practice, as we lack useful data which could characterise actual practice with any certainty.

3.1 *The place of ‘literary reading’ and the primary-secondary school link*

Until very recently, the main trend in these four French-speaking regions was to attach little importance to literature at primary school and to pay more attention to it

⁶ In Belgium the ‘free schools’ (*‘enseignement libre’*), mainly Catholic, educate 59% of the students in the secondary and 42.6% in the primary; the schools of the ‘Communauté’ (i.e. of the State) educate 25% of students in the secondary and 9.6% in the primary; the ‘provincial’ schools educate 8.5% of students in the secondary, but do not have any primary sections; and finally, the ‘communal’ (i.e. local) schools educate 7.47% students in the secondary and 47.5% in the primary.

in the last years of secondary school. This trend does not seem to have changed in Switzerland, where the word ‘literature’ itself is almost never written in didactics books related to primary school. How to understand this difference? It is difficult to say. Perhaps there is a link with the tradition of the Swiss national identity, which is more based on functional values, and less on the idea of a cultural and literary heritage. In France, however, the official directions from 2000 introduce literary reading didactics at the primary level. This set of didactics, which considers contemporary youth literature as the preferred medium, is defined by Gervais (1993, 1998) as a careful exploration of the different components of the text, in which understanding has to be distinguished from interpretation. A similar change seems to have taken place in Belgium and Quebec, where the rare presence of the word ‘literature’ in primary official instructions cannot hide the emergence of a didactic favourable to literature. In this statement, I am thinking about the Belgian ‘literary reading groups’ (suggested by Terwagne, Vanhulle & Lafontaine, 2001) or the literary reading activities suggested by Sorin (2003) in Quebec, which alternate the postures of ‘lu’ and ‘lectant’ developed by Picard (1986) – that is the postures of psycho-affective participation and critical distanciation (cf. Dufays 1994).

The notion of literary reading is thus taking a new place in didactic instructions (in the official instructions as well as in the handbooks) in primary and secondary school. This also marks an important shift in literature didactics – the stress lies more and more on the plural activity of the reader facing the ‘resisting’ (or difficult) text, which literary works often are (Tauveron, 1999). And this activity is no longer considered as a luxury reserved for certain students and/or for the last years of school, but as a basic activity which has to be practised by all pupils as soon as possible. The result is that some attention is now paid to the reception of literature.

It should be mentioned, however, that the notion of ‘literary reading’ has not yet been given a definition which is shared by literature theoreticians and French didacticists, probably because of another paradigmatic stance by these two groups. Whereas Gervais’ conception focuses on critical distanciation (a stance which aims at explaining and analysing several elements of the text) and inspires French official instructions, Picard’s conception insists more on the coming-and-going movement between participation and distanciation, and underlies the Belgian and Quebec discourses. Between these two conceptions, a gap remains which could be the source of some misunderstandings by teachers (Daunay, 1999) – there is a risk that some of them reduce literary reading to a traditional activity, consisting of scholarly interpretations reserved for the elite.

3.2 The place of literary culture and national literature

Generally speaking, it is in France that literary culture and the chronological study of heritage works have always had the most important place in official instructions. This was already the case in the period in which the four regions showed a strong homogeneity, and it is the case again today. Indeed, it is clear from the most recent official instructions that no other French speaking country or region asks its teachers to review the heritage-founders’ texts from the start of secondary school, or even

imposes lists of authors or literary works to be read by the students. This is easily explained by the symbolic importance of literature in the French collective imagination. French identity is widely based on references to authors who have illustrated the great moments of French history and who appeared to be the spokesmen of a national sensibility. Nowadays, the 'identity' issue is tempered by a more technical purpose – the requirement to know references useful in decoding intertexts in contemporary discourses (literary or not) which use them. Another goal which is perhaps more fundamental and linked to literary knowledge itself, is that in order to give literature meaning and worth, it would seem necessary to know the texts which have brought historical breaks in the relationship that humans entertain with the world and language. In any case, in France it is absolutely unthinkable to consider educating a French citizen without teaching the basic literary culture of the country. The importance of literary culture also appears, perhaps to a lesser extent, in Quebec, where the official instructions for the end of secondary school state that half of the authors taught in the classroom should be Quebecois. The importance of literary culture is also real in Belgium, but there tradition has almost always been to prefer 'French literature from France' to the detriment of Belgian writers. In the 1999 reference manual defining the 'final skills', a dozen Belgian names are suggested but without any compulsion. Consequently, in the Catholic education programs that came out soon after, these suggestions completely disappeared. It is a sign that, despite some didacticists' committed assertions (Rosier, Dumortier, Dufays) and the recent publishing of anthologies and collections highlighting the national heritage, there is still in Belgium a certain reluctance to promote the country's image and/or heritage.

Things are different in the Swiss official instructions, where very little place is given to literary culture – literature is not even mentioned before the end of secondary school. Reading skills are clearly preferred to cultural knowledge and no special attention is paid to national literary heritage.

3.3 The place of literary writing

Let us turn to the didactics of literary writing. If we except the few experiments in writing workshops, no real value has been placed on the notion of writing in the official instructions in French-speaking countries for the last 30 years. The reason for this might be that it seemed too closely linked to the romantic idea of 'gift', an idea which conveys an outdated conception of textual production. Instead, the four regions have developed didactics for textual production which aim at objectivising as much as possible the different media, codes, genres, phases and strategies that can be used in the writing process. Instead of literary writing, we speak about writing 'fictional texts' (in Switzerland, for instance) or 'poetic texts'. But in general, as far as writing is concerned, literary genres are less practised than 'functional' genres such as argumentation or criticism. So in Belgium, neither the reference manual about 'final skills' nor the educational programs for general secondary schools make mention of 'creative' writing (such as short novels or poetry). The only references

made to writing of this kind concern students in early secondary or technical education.

However, a different situation is now evolving in France, which again distinguishes itself from the other 3 regions by its more prescriptive attitude. Indeed, the 2002 official instructions for primary and lower secondary state that an important place should be left to creative writing in various genres from the first school years. Even if 'creative' writing has not been very precisely defined and raises problems of evaluation, it explicitly invites the students to take part in games and experiments related to literature. This work finds an interesting extension in the study of writers' drafts, which is highly recommended in terminal classes. However in France, the French course in the terminal class is optional and only involves a limited number of pupils.

4. TEACHERS' TRAINING IN LITERATURE

What about the literature training of French teachers in the four regions? There are similarities in Quebec and Switzerland. In these two places, all teachers receive their whole training at university. They study over 5 years in the faculty of educational sciences. A large part of the training is devoted to generic ('transversal') aspects of education. Education in literature as such is especially important for secondary teachers and in Quebec some educators are nowadays trying to implement didactics for literary reading (Sorin, 2003).

Things are quite different in France where the training of future teachers is divided into two steps. The first one, taking place at university, is made up of a scholarly but specialised training in the study of certain movements, genres, authors and works. The second one, which takes place at the IUFM (Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maitres – University Institutes for Teacher Education), is both more general and focused on education, but it is influenced by recruitment examinations. For example, a primary school teacher's training ends with an essay presenting an objective synthesis of a pedagogical question and with an analysis of a pupil's writing and educational documents, but it does not contain any compulsory literary dimension. On the other hand, a secondary school teacher's training contains issues of literature (such as an essay or composed commentary about, say, a play of Racine or a novel of Balzac) but demonstrates ignorance of entire sections of the secondary school program. In effect, teacher training programs do not take secondary school programs into account. Generally, literature education in France seems rather disparate: future teachers do not get a general (historical, institutional, generic and theoretical) overview of literature and there seems to be a frequent (con)fusion between training to read and literature didactics.

Finally, Belgium has, until recently, been the scene of an ancient split between two levels of teachers. On one hand, we have primary school teachers (the so-called 'instituteurs') and lower secondary teachers ('régents' in Belgian French), who follow a 3 year education hautes écoles but do not go to university. On the other hand, we have upper secondary school teachers, who have 5 years of training in universities. The literature training for primary school teachers and 'régents' may be de-

scribed as disparate because of a lack of common programs and a lack of literary training. Any literature training is more based on practice than on theory, and attaches a growing importance to youth literature and to didactics for literary reading. As far as the 'licenciés' are concerned (ie the graduate teachers for upper secondary school), their literature training is spread over four years of 'candidature' and 'licence' in Romance languages and literature⁷, followed by one year of 'agrégation de l'enseignement supérieur'. In the latter, the educational and didactic requirements have increased over the last decade, but they remain more theoretical than practical due to their university anchorage. In concrete terms, this literature training is characterised by the importance given to the cultural dimension (literature history), the conceptual dimension (literature theory), and the methodological dimension (literature analysis), as well as by the limited place given to marginal and contemporary literature.

In all four regions, we are struck by the greater importance that is given to the narrative genres (compared to theatre and poetry) and to activities based on reading and analysis (rather than writing or speaking), but also to encyclopaedic knowledge and to analysing great works or particular topics – rather than a global approach to the fact of literature, which would attempt to consider literature as a phenomenon and attempt to link together several approaches.

Generally speaking, the training of French literature teachers in all four regions attests to the contradictions and tensions which characterise the whole field of literature teaching. In the classroom, on the one hand, the stress on the pedagogy of skills favours the development of reading, writing and sometimes speaking activities, which are nowadays more coherent and more rooted in the students' interests and social life than in the past, but in reality, tends to privilege technical skills and specific communication activities compared to the acquisition of cultural knowledge and to more global and reflexive analysis. On the educational side, on the other hand, the notion of 'skill' comes up against an educational tradition which is still dominated by the acquisition of encyclopaedic knowledge made up of isolated items (especially in the Faculties of Arts) and of educational and didactic skills (in the Faculties of Education and especially in the IUFM), which give the teachers a very limited view of literature and of literature teaching (Rosier & Dufays, 2003). In my view, it is now the role of literature didacticians to point out these tensions and also to create the appropriate tools to resolve them.

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⁷ Since 2004, this education schedule has been replaced by the European common schedule ('Bologna Process') which consists of 3 years of 'Bachelor' (1st cycle) followed by two years of 'Master' (2nd cycle). Henceforth, the teacher education program will be integrated into the Master's program.

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